



Independent Evaluation of the Georgian Institute of Public Administration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Georgian Institute of Public Administration (GIPA) was established in 1993. The goal of the institute and its programs is to positively impact the effectiveness of public administration and the respect for public service in Georgia by educating a cadre of public servants in public administration.

Since its founding, GIPA has been supported by grants from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State to the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) in Washington, D.C. The Institute also receives support directly from the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Georgia. Within the U.S. Department of State, grants to the National Academy of Public Administration have been administered by the Office of Citizen Exchanges.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This independent evaluation of the Georgian Institute of Public Administration concludes that the Institute is well run by the Georgian staff, effective, and exceeds its initial goals. The only aspect of Institute management that needs sustained attention is the role played by the National Academy of Public Administration. Better record-keeping, recruitment of a more diverse group of American faculty, and the creation of basic orientation materials are definitely called for. Despite some disorganization on the American side, GIPA students are well screened and rigorously trained. The institute has developed a reputation for excellence that is luring Georgia's best and brightest into the field of public administration. Alumni are highly sought after in both the public and private sector. Though the financial temptation to enter the private sector work is strong, a substantial proportion of alumni choose employment in the public sector.

The institute has come to stand for integrity, energy, and creativity in public administration. Despite its youth and small size, the Georgian Institute of Public Administration is becoming a growing influence on Georgian public administration. The Institute makes an impact on public administration through its alumni, workshops, internship program, guest instructors, and guest speakers. Its existence and the work of its alumni are improving the image of public administration in Georgia.

We strongly urge the U.S. Department of State to continue funding this program when it comes up for renewal in 2003. It is a very small program relative to most of the FREEDOM Support Act Exchange Programs in the region and its results are easier to demonstrate. In addition, we suggest that the U.S. Department of State seriously consider increasing funding by a few thousand dollars to cover the addition of three logically-related projects. The evaluation uncovered the need for: 1) a case study workshop where alumni could learn how to turn their employment experiences into teaching materials for future cohorts, 2) a small grants program to fund working papers in targeted issues of public policy, and 3) a small grant to fund the creation of a Georgian language textbook of public administration.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

GIPA offers a nine-month masters program, which is open to people who both hold a bachelor's degree and possess sufficient fluency to take a course of study in English. The program has admitted 30-35 students a year, beginning with the class of 1995. Instead of having multiple semester-long courses, courses are presented consecutively in three-to-four week blocks. The GIPA program begins in January with a series of preparatory courses in English.

Substantive courses begin in April and extend until the end of October. Typically eight core courses are taught. The mixture of courses varies slightly, but among the courses commonly taught are: Budgeting & Finance, Case Studies, Economics, Ethics & Responsibility in Government, Human Resources Management, Law & Public Administration, Organizational Management, Public Policy Analysis, and Research Methodology. Each core course entails three hours of class-time each morning, five days a week. All courses run for 45 hours (3 weeks), except for economics, which runs for 60 hours (4 weeks). The core courses are taught by visiting American faculty and lecturers, in English.

The curriculum is supplemented by short courses on Georgia-specific issues, taught by Georgian experts, in Georgian. Typical short courses include: the Basics of Management, Applied Psychology and Philosophy, History of the Georgian State, Georgian Constitution & Law, Georgian Public Administration, Conflict Resolution & Negotiations, Georgian Tax Administration, Role of NGOs in the formation of Civil Society, Geopolitics, Current Economic Development of Georgia, Basics of Georgian Budgeting, and the Development of the Local Government System in Georgia.

When formal coursework is completed, all students participate in a one-month internship at a governmental institution, as arranged by the GIPA staff. In addition to coursework, GIPA has instituted an annual policy paper project that the students work on and then present to relevant U.S. and Georgian government officials. In previous years the papers have focused on corruption in Georgian government and health care reform. The Class of 2001 held presentations at GIPA and USAID on their project “How to increase Georgian Government Revenue.” Most NAPA visiting professors incorporated work for this project into their courses.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation was conducted by Lehmann Surveys and Research, a small women-owned consulting firm with long-term collaborative ties with academics from the former Soviet Union. The evaluation began in 2000 with a review of program files at the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Policy and Evaluation and the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) in Washington, D.C. – the contractor for the program.

Two surveys were designed by Dr. Lehmann for this evaluation – a Faculty Survey and a Survey for Students and Alumni. Overall, fifteen GIPA faculty and 86% of students and alumni from the classes of 1995-2001 completed the surveys. Some faculty requested additional interviews, which were conducted by Dr. Lehmann. In Georgia Dr. Lehmann also met and interviewed the PAO in Tbilisi, Sharon Hudson-Dean, GIPA Dean Mzia Mikeladze, and GIPA’s Rector Giorgi Margvelashvili. A total of five focus groups of 8 to 10 people each were held in Tbilisi in late May and early June of 2001. Dr. Lehmann and her staff co-conducted the focus group sessions in a mixture of English and Russian *without* a translator or GIPA staff present. Each session lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours.

The final data collection involved in-depth personal interviews with Georgian public officials. These interviews were conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia between May 28th and June 8th 2001. The six personal interviews subjects were chosen for a combination of reasons including their knowledge of GIPA, their knowledge of the current challenges faced by Georgian public administrators, and their knowledge of American institutions of public administration. Together they drew from their experiences in the Georgian Ministries of Commerce, Finance, Justice, and Transport, the Georgian Parliament – Human Resources Division and Research Division, and the National Bank of Georgia. Several have studied in the U.S. or worked for international NGOs. Dr. Jerry F. Hough, James B. Duke Professor of Political Science, Duke University conducted these interviews with oversight by Dr. Lehmann. The interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s place of work, in English or Russian. No translators or GIPA administrative personnel were present during the interviews.

Key Findings

Student Profile

- The parents of students and alumni are from the middle and upper classes of Georgian society. The most common occupations of fathers were: engineer (17%), scientists (excluding college teachers) (10%), information technology professions (8%), heads of state organizations and subdivisions (6%), and physicians (6%). Mothers typically were: school teachers (21%), physicians (13%), scientists (excluding college professors) (9%), engineers (7%), and college professors (6%).
- Incoming GIPA students have bachelor's degrees from 62 separate major fields. The most common majors from which GIPA draws are English (18.5%), economics (11.7%), Western European languages & literatures (4.8%), and mathematics (4%). These overall figures hide large gender differences in GIPA's student pool. Fully one third of the female students are English majors; less than 4% of the male enrollees are English majors. Incoming students vary in terms of their interests, but on average a third of them are interested in federal government administration. Finance and taxation are also strong interests of the students.

Student Selection Process

- Most students and alumni report that they heard about GIPA from other GIPA alumni or friends. Approximately 25% heard about the school from the mass media. Relatively few (5%) learned about GIPA from an event at their school.
- Students and alumni give GIPA high marks for having an objective selection process – something that is *not* taken for granted in Georgia. Ninety-five percent of those interviewed thought the selection process was completely (54%) or somewhat (41%) objective.

Curriculum

- The GIPA curriculum was compared to the curricula of the top American schools of public administration and public policy. Based on the comparison, the 6 courses that should receive serious consideration for addition to the GIPA curriculum are:
 1. Macroeconomic Analysis
 2. Microeconomics & Public Policy/ Managerial Economics for Public Administrators
 3. Executive Leadership/Governance & Leadership Development
 4. Information Systems for Managers/ Information Technology Management in the Public Sector/ Technology & Information Management/ Public Management of Information Systems
 5. Public Management Workshop/ Management Science for Public Affairs
 6. Policy Analysis & Political Choice/ Mobilizing for Political Action/ Responsibilities of Public Action
- To the extent that it is possible, NAPA should exploit its contacts with international programs of public administration to assist GIPA in locating at least one professor with substantive experience of the problems associated with overcoming traditional administrative norms and cultures.

NAPA Program Management

- NAPA had kept extremely poor records of yearly curricula. What did exist was an often inaccurate *proposed curriculum* submitted to the U.S. Department of State and never amended. There were no guidelines or vetting procedures for selecting faculty. No printed instructions to new faculty were designed or systematically given out. Few course syllabi were on file. In short, program management at NAPA is not up to the basic standards of an American graduate program at an accredited school.
- Specifically, fully 42% of American faculty surveyed reported receiving their invitation to teach at GIPA *at the last minute*. Twenty percent said that they *never* received a general program description or orientation materials, another twenty percent said they received them at the last minute. More than half either never received teaching guidelines (36%) or received them at the last minute (18%). Forty-five percent received the course materials that they ordered at the last minute.
- Satisfaction with NAPA's performance was extremely high when it came to arranging housing, resolving personal, travel, and academic matters. No fault can be found in these realms.

Faculty & Teaching Evaluation

- Half of students and alumni thought that GIPA faculty were better than expected. Only 8 percent thought that they were worse than expected. Seventy-four percent of students and alumni reported that they had been asked to submit formal teacher evaluations and they were "satisfied that their comments were considered by the administrative staff."
- A satisfactory match between student interests and course materials indicates that GIPA's selection process is on track. It also indicates that GIPA's recruiting literature and advertisements are not misleading.
- Forty-seven percent of students and alumni thought that the course selection was better than expected. Thirty-seven percent thought that course comprehensiveness was better than expected. More than half thought that course content was better than expected. Both students and alumni were extremely positive about the usefulness of the information that they learned in GIPA classes.

Student Performance Evaluation

- Three quarters of the students and alumni thought that their English was always adequate to understand class lectures, read assignments, and write assignments. For the most part faculty concurred.
- Several faculty members recommended more computer instruction prior to the start of the program. It was thought that in addition to being able to write and copy documents, students needed to have more facility with the spreadsheet program Excel, which several courses use.
- Despite some initial shortcomings, faculty were very positive when asked to rate the typical student in their most recent class. The main exception concerned homework preparation, which 43% of faculty rated as "poor" or "fair." Twenty-eight percent of faculty thought that class participation could use improvement as well. Final coursework received the highest rating with 57% of faculty judging the performance to be either "very good" or "excellent."

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- Partly as a result of instituting signed contracts and increased vigilance on the part of both the Dean and the faculty, there has been a great reduction in discipline-related complaints regarding the Class of 2002. Instances of cheating, which plagued a previous class, have been dramatically reduced according to faculty assessment of the problem.

Internship Training

- Of the 150 internships held between 1995 and 2000, 79% were hosted by federal ministries or agencies, 7% by international assistance organizations, 5% by local government, 5% by private companies, and 3% by NGOs.
- Overall 52% of GIPA alumni rate their internships as “excellent” or “good.” A quarter rate them as “satisfactory,” and 17% rate them as “unsatisfactory.” Some internship hosts do not know how to best make use of the students’ talents and abilities. First time internship hosts were the least prepared.
- Internship hosts liked to have the students at meetings with foreigners because their GIPA training prepared interns to understand not only the English words, but also the Western concepts and priorities. Interns could translate Western concepts into a Georgian framework, and vice versa.
- Looking at the first job that GIPA graduates took after graduation – typically 1-2 months after their internships were completed – we find that 29% of alumni from the classes of 1995-2000 accepted a position with their internship host organization. Rates of return differ. Sometimes employers fail to offer jobs, either because they have no openings, or because the fit between GIPA alumni and the position is not good enough.

Employment

- Most of the alumni are working either in the public sector – primarily in the federal government (27%), for international assistance agencies such as CARE, the UN, the Red Cross, USAID (20%), or for Georgian and International NGOs (7%). Relatively few are working in private foreign firms (27%).
- Most alumni seem to switch jobs every couple of years or so, although those working for international assistance organizations are the most likely to be unemployed as they switch from contract to contract. Looking at the data for the first job post graduation, interim job (where available), and the current job, one finds that more than two-thirds of alumni tend to stay in the sector they initially chose, e.g. health, energy, finance, foreign affairs, etc.
- There is surprisingly very little movement from employment in the state sector to the private sector. There is some movement from the private sector into the state and federal government agencies. There is also some movement from working for International NGOs to working for Georgian NGOs. Thus in a very short space of years, GIPA alumni show movement *into* the public sector, despite the lower salaries, political instability, and intermittent chaos of reform.
- 85% of students and alumni report that the most important thing they consider when looking for a job is the salary. The second criterion is that the work be interesting (65%), and the third that they have an opportunity to help society (30%).
- Forty-one percent of alumni reported that GIPA training has been a crucial factor in receiving a new job or a promotion. Eighty-five percent overall say that GIPA training helped.

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- Seventy-nine percent report that their decision-making responsibilities have increased. Almost two-thirds report that their supervisory responsibilities *and* their income have increased as a result of graduating from GIPA.

Stakeholders' Overall Assessment of GIPA Program

- When asked to rate the impact of GIPA on their opportunity for career advancement, half of alumni said that the program impact *exceeded* their expectations. Half of alumni also thought both that GIPA's impact on their employment satisfaction *exceeded* their expectations, and that GIPA's impact on their professional qualifications had *exceeded* their expectations.
- Half of the American faculty said that teaching at GIPA was one of the more rewarding teaching experiences that they had had in their lengthy careers. Half said that teaching at GIPA was one of the three *most* rewarding teaching experiences that they had ever had.
- The National Academy of Public Administration has had too casual an attitude toward their obligations regarding program management. This evaluator agrees with the assessment of Carole Neves, Case Studies instructor and NAPA's program manager for several years prior to her move to the Smithsonian Institution. She wrote that GIPA needs "Sustained, dedicated attention in Washington, D.C."

Alumni Contact & Activities

- Most faculty (80%) report that at least one student has contacted them for subsequent career advice or academic assistance. Approximately one quarter of the faculty report having developed a collaborative relationship with former students. Students corroborate this high level of post-graduation contact, half of it personal, half of it professional.
- Ten percent of alumni report starting joint projects with American professors, 9% with internship hosts, 5% with Georgian professors, 15% with GIPA administrators, and 19% with fellow GIPA students and alumni.
- A third of GIPA alumni report that they continued a program of study elsewhere after completing their GIPA degree.

GIPA faculty and staff have been extremely active in arranging for guest speakers, meetings, and conferences. But less than a third of alumni know about these special events. Additional funding should be set aside for staff assistance with alumni notification of guest speakers and special topic seminars.

Recommendations

For NAPA Administrators

- NAPA needs to become more disciplined about lining up the instructors several months prior to the start of the year. They need to keep a copy of course syllabi used by previous instructors *and make this information available to new instructors*. They need to set up teaching guidelines and orientation materials for new faculty, which give the faculty a sense of the type of teaching situation they will encounter.
- NAPA needs to cast a wider net in securing faculty. They need to branch out beyond the usual suspects at NAPA and really try to advertise the program at similar schools in the U.S. Many of the basic GIPA courses can be taught at least as effectively by junior faculty. Junior faculty are much more likely to appreciate a nominal extra salary and the opportunity to set up new research contacts. They are more likely to be able to travel to Georgia for a month. Most importantly, they have their entire careers ahead of them for collaborative work. Contacts made with young Georgians will have a greater chance of blossoming into joint projects and publications in American journals.
- NAPA should make syllabi from previous instructors available so that instructors who follow know what material has been covered over the course of the year in all courses, and what material is typically covered in the course they are teaching for the first time.

For GIPA Administrators

- The GIPA application committee works hard to secure a diverse group of applicants. The main problem is that too large a percentage of the female applicants are English students. They need to strategize about ways to broaden the profile, particularly of female applicants.
- GIPA has an honor code, but faculty indicate that some students do not take it seriously enough. Though honor codes have a mixed history of effectiveness in the U.S., studies indicate that they work best in small schools where social pressure can be applied. We strongly recommend that GIPA have each student discuss the honor code individually with staff, sign the code in their presence, and receive a clear list of actions that will be taken in case the honor code is violated. Dean Mikeladze's response to this issue, contained in the body of this report, indicates that several of these measures have been taken in the year since faculty were surveyed.
- Institute a regime by which each faculty member writes a short evaluation of each student and leaves this in the student folder in the faculty office. Even a quick checklist of common issues such as study habits, academic strengths and weaknesses, and classroom deportment would be very useful for the incoming faculty to review. Given the teaching arrangements, GIPA faculty have little or no contact with each other. This written record would foil attempts by students to take advantage of faculty ignorance.
- Invite traditional civil servants to teach and lecture at GIPA. Their resulting knowledge of the students—and appreciation for the teaching honorarium—gives them an incentive to help place students as interns and to subsequently hire some permanently.

For Faculty

- Faculty recommend that new instructors be discouraged from using bulky textbooks. Students are more likely to complete the reading assignments if they are given out in smaller increments. Faculty recommend handing out syllabi and making vocabulary lists with definitions of key English words.
- Faculty and alumni recommend supplementing U.S. texts with more frequent use of examples from newly emerging democracies. When possible, international case studies would be extremely useful. In particular this material should draw on examples from southern and eastern countries. Lebanon, Greece, southern Italy (especially Sicily), Spain, and Portugal were particularly suggested.

For the Office of Citizen Exchanges

The institute presently has no funding or facilities to undertake policy research on its own. However, the institute has received multiple requests from state and local government officials who would like policy reports on various topics.

- Our estimate is that 10-15 alumni per year would take advantage of an opportunity to write a policy paper. This task would be in addition to their full-time job obligations. If this idea is appealing, it is recommended that the stakeholders work together to set out clear guidelines with respect to topic selection, length, seriousness, and quality. Specific, concrete problems could be addressed in a paper that could be completed in one month. More fundamental policy issues, such as a plan for restructuring a particular government agency or problems of tax administration in Georgia would take up to six months to analyze and should be paid accordingly. (See Appendix A for a cost estimate for such a program.) These papers could be widely circulated in the U.S. government, the Georgian government, used in GIPA classes, and offered for publication in journals and textbooks.
- Consider David Darchiashvili's suggestion that the U.S. Department of State institute a requirement that the Georgian government hire a certain percentage of GIPA graduates as a condition of its continued support of GIPA. He recommends that the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi exercise broad oversight to ensure that an effort is made to fulfill the condition. Perhaps a nicer way to achieve the same end would be to trade off policy assistance for job placement assistance.

Many attendees of the five focus group sessions expressed an interest in writing up employment experiences in the form of case studies for use by current and future students. Currently the case studies course is one of the most popular, but there are few Georgian cases to review.

- Now that there are 200+ alumni available to write up cases, it is strongly suggested that additional funding be provided to pay for an instructor to hold a weeklong case writing workshop for alumni. Alumni who write complete cases and submit them to GIPA for instructional use should be rewarded for their efforts with an honorarium. (See Appendix A for a cost estimate for such a program.)
- Currently there is no basic textbook on public administration written in Georgian. Yet several alumni expressed an interest in taking on this project. Funding should be made available to support a few alumni who could work with the American faculty and use GIPA's facilities. The production of this textbook would move the institute significantly down the road to Georgianization of the curriculum.

For Future Discussion Among the Stakeholders

- The curriculum currently falls short the requirements for a U.S. Master's Degree in Public Administration. A serious discussion among stakeholders should be held as to discuss whether it is necessary and/or desirable to increase the length of study beyond 10 months. If the course of study were to be extended several courses could be added to the curriculum to make it more comparable to U.S. Master's Programs in Public Administration. (The body of the report contains specific courses recommendations and their rationale.) On the other hand, graduates are already highly sought after and considered to be better trained than their local competition.
- A Muskie Ph.D. program was launched in 2001. Several of GIPA's most successful alumni were finalists in this program. The GIPA program goal was to train Georgians to effect change in Georgian public administration. The most successful graduates were in pivotal positions in the Georgian government. They resigned those positions and went to the U.S. for 3-5 years as Muskie Ph.D. students. A certain percentage will never return to local government in Georgia. Those that do return will be "out of the loop" having been gone so long. Currently U.S. Embassy personnel actively support GIPA alumni as candidates for the Muskie Ph.D. program. This raises two issues of concern. First, are GIPA's people adequately trained to enter a Ph.D. program in the U.S., given that their Master's program is truncated? Second, at present there is the appearance of a conflict of interest in sacrificing the goals of one U.S. funded program (GIPA) to more easily attain an applicant pool for a different U.S. funded program (Muskie Ph.D.) Stakeholders should decide how much encouragement GIPA alumni should be given to apply for the Muskie Ph.D. program. While it is unlikely that the best course of action would be to bar GIPA alumni from the Muskie competition, there are several levels of support that fall short of the current one of active sponsorship. Specifically, stakeholder should discuss whether support be limited to letters of recommendation, help with the application, passive advertisement of the Muskie Ph.D. program, or active recruitment and sponsorship of candidates.